

# News Release

# Senator Pete V. Domenici

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## DOMENICI VOTES AGAINST "AUTOPILOT" LANDS BILL DESPITE SUPPORT FOR INDIVIDUAL PROGRAMS

### Senator Says \$45 Billion, 15-Year CARA Entitlement Needs More Oversight

WASHINGTON -- U.S. Senator Pete Domenici today voted against the **Conservation and Reinvestment Act** (CARA), a 15-year new federal entitlement that will cost \$45 billion after the committee rejected his amendment to make the bill subject to the annual fiscal discipline of the appropriations process.

Domenici serves on the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee that today voted 13-7 to approve the CARA legislation (H.R.701) and pass it on to the full Senate for consideration. The legislation was developed by Senators Frank Murkowski (R-Alaska) and Jeff Bingaman (D-N.M.), the committee's chairman and ranking Democrat, respectively.

"I support many of the programs that this bill will fund, but I think it is fiscally irresponsible to create a new federal entitlement and put this funding on autopilot for the next 15 years," Domenici said.

"The programs funded by CARA would be categorically classified as untouchable priorities over everything else funded by the federal government, including education programs which, for example, do not get automatic funding. The annual \$3 billion has to come from somewhere, and the question is which programs do we hurt to fund this bill," he said.

"The Youth Conservation Corps, for instance, is given prominence over the Indian Health Service, BIA school construction, forest fire fighting--all without much congressional oversight for the next 15 years," he said. "The money we provide for the Corps or land acquisition will come out of the entire pot of funding we have for American Indian programs, for national parks and public lands management."

Domenici-sponsored amendments to subject land acquisitions to the National Environmental Policy Act review process and to make the entire bill subject to annual appropriations were also struck down. Domenici unsuccessfully pushed amendments that would have also established a two- or five-year authorizing limit to the bill. He also supported a defeated amendment that would have strengthened private property rights by stipulating that land acquisitions must be bought from willing sellers.

The committee-passed bill creates a trust fund for the purposes of funding: federal and state land acquisition; coastal impact assistance even in states where there is no offshore oil and gas production; urban parks; historic preservation; conservation easements; and other activities.

The bill directs Congress to appropriate \$450 million annually for the Land and Water Conservation Fund, which would trigger the automatic release of an additional \$2.5 billion each year to spend on other selected programs.